

Eating, Diet, and Nutrition

Your dietitian or doctor may suggest a special eating plan for you. You may have to avoid a diet high in protein, fat, **sodium**, and **potassium**.

- Cut back on protein, especially animal products such as meat. Damaged kidneys may fail to remove protein waste products from your blood. Diets high in protein make your kidneys work harder and fail sooner.
- Avoid a high-fat diet. High-fat diets are high in **cholesterol**. Cholesterol is a type of fat found in your body's cells, blood, and many foods. Your body needs some cholesterol to work the right way. For example, your body uses cholesterol to make certain essential hormones and maintain nerve function. However, your body makes all the cholesterol it needs. If you often eat foods that are high in cholesterol, or if high cholesterol runs in your family, extra cholesterol in your blood can build up over time in the walls of your blood vessels and arteries. High blood cholesterol can lead to heart disease and stroke, some of the biggest health problems for people with diabetes.

- Avoid high-sodium foods. Sodium is a mineral found in salt and other foods. High levels of sodium may raise your blood pressure. Some high-sodium foods include canned food, frozen dinners, and hot dogs. The amount of sodium is listed on the food label, so you can see which foods have the highest levels. Try to limit your sodium to less than a teaspoon a day, or about 2,300 milligrams (mg) a day. If you have high blood pressure or are African American, middle-aged, or older, aim for no more than 1,500 mg of sodium per day. Ask your doctor or your dietitian about how much sodium you can have.
- Ask your doctor about the amount of potassium you need. Potassium is a mineral that helps your heartbeat stay regular and muscles work right. Healthy kidneys keep the right amount of potassium in your body. However, if you have severe kidney damage, high levels of potassium may cause an abnormal heart rhythm or even make your heart stop, called cardiac arrest. Some high-potassium foods include apricots, bananas, oranges, and potatoes.

Read more about healthy eating and kidney disease in these publications at www.kidney.niddk.nih.gov:

- *Eat Right to Feel Right on Hemodialysis*
- *Nutrition for Advanced Chronic Kidney Disease in Adults*
- *Nutrition for Early Chronic Kidney Disease in Adults*
- *What I need to know about Eating and Diabetes*